Amendments to the Claims

Claim 1 **(Currently Amended)** A holding unit for holding a substrate, said holding unit comprising:

a holder plate; and

a vacuum suction member adapted to be brought into contact with a peripheral portion of a surface of the substrate to suck the substrate, said vacuum suction member having no contact with regions of the substrate other than the peripheral portion,

wherein said holder plate, said vacuum suction member and the substrate define a space which can be purged by blowing N_2 gas thereinto so that etchant is prohibited from entering into the space during processing of the substrate, and

wherein said holder plate has a purging aperture for blowing the N_2 gas into the space defined by said holder plate, said vacuum suction member and the substrate, said purging aperture being connected to a N_2 source by a tube located in a cylindrical rotary shaft mounted to said holder plate.

Claim 2 **(Withdrawn)** A holding unit of claim 1, wherein said vacuum suction member is shaped so as to surround an element forming region of the substrate, thereby preventing processing from being applied to the element forming region.

Claim 3 **(Withdrawn)** A holding unit of claim 1, wherein said vacuum suction member has an annular groove and an exhaust path formed therein, said annular groove being open in a side facing the substrate, and said exhaust path opening to said annular groove.

Claim 4 **(Withdrawn)** A holding unit of claim 1, wherein a material forming a portion of said vacuum suction member to be brought into contact with the substrate has a hardness lower than that of the substrate.

Claim 5 **(Previously Presented)** A processing apparatus for processing a substrate, said processing apparatus comprising:

a holding unit of claim 1; and

a surface processing unit for processing another surface of the substrate held by said holding unit.

Claim 6 **(Original)** A processing apparatus of claim 5, further comprising a unit operable to perform at least one of cleaning and drying of the substrate.

Claim 7 **(Original)** A processing apparatus of claim 5, further comprising a dipping bath for dipping the substrate held by said holding unit.

Claim 8 **(Previously Presented)** A processing apparatus of claim 5, further comprising an evaluation unit operable to check a condition of the substrate after processing and to determine a resultant condition achieved by processing the other surface of the substrate.

Claim 9 **(Canceled)**

Claim 10 **(Withdrawn)** A holding unit of claim 3, wherein said annular groove is substantially V-shaped.

Claim 11 **(Withdrawn)** A holding unit of claim 3, wherein said annular groove is substantially rectangular shaped.

Claim 12 **(Withdrawn)** A holding unit of claim 1, wherein said vacuum suction member comprises at least two ring-shaped members forming at least one annular groove therebetween, said annular groove being open in a side facing the substrate.

Claim 13 **(Canceled)**

Claim 14 **(New)** A holding unit for holding a substrate having an element forming section to be shielded from a liquid during processing of the substrate, the holding unit comprising:

an annular vacuum suction member for holding the substrate by contacting and sucking an edge of the element forming section of the substrate;

a disc-shaped holder plate having a face to which said annular vacuum suction member is attached; and

a gas purging aperture provided in said disc-shaped holder plate for purging a gas into a hollow section defined by said annular vacuum suction member, the substrate and said disc-shaped holder plate.

Claim 15 **(New)** The holding unit according to claim 14, wherein the gas is N_2 gas and said annular vacuum suction member is made of a material having a hardness that is lower than that of the substrate.

Claim 16 **(New)** The holding unit according to claim 14, wherein said annular vacuum suction member is made of a resilient material.

Claim 17 **(New)** The holding unit according to claim 16, wherein said resilient material is one of natural rubber, synthetic rubber and flexible plastic.

Claim 18 **(New)** The holding unit according to claim 14, further comprising a cylinder portion for rotating said holder plate along a horizontal plane.

Claim 19 **(New)** A processing apparatus for processing a substrate having an element forming section and a back surface, the element forming section to be shielded from a liquid during processing of the substrate, the processing apparatus comprising:

a dipping bath for dipping the substrate into a bath liquid and processing the back surface of the substrate;

an annular vacuum suction member for holding the substrate by contacting and sucking an edge of the element forming section of the substrate;

a disc-shaped holder plate having a face to which said annular vacuum suction member is attached; and

a gas purging aperture provided in said disc-shaped holder plate for purging gas into a hollow section defined by said annular vacuum suction member, the substrate and said disc-shaped holder plate.

Claim 20 **(New)** The processing apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the gas is N_2 gas and the bath liquid is an etchant.

Claim 21 **(New)** The processing apparatus according to claim 19, further comprising a cylinder for vertical movement of said disc-shaped holder plate and a rotary shaft motor for rotating said disc-shaped holder plate along a horizontal plane.

Claim 22 **(New)** The processing apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said annular vacuum suction member is made of a material having a hardness lower that is lower than that of the substrate.

Claim 23 **(New)** The processing apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said annular vacuum suction member is made of a resilient material.

Claim 24 **(New)** The processing apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said resilient material is one of natural rubber, synthetic rubber and flexible plastic.